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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 7320  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 000523

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SUBJECT: BRAZIL: SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHAIRMAN CONCERNED  
ABOUT POSSIBLE TERRORIST PRESENCE IN BRAZIL

REF: BRASILIA 507

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CLIFFORD SOBEL, REASON 1.4 B/D

¶1. (S) Summary. Senate Foreign Relations and National Defense Committee Chairman Heraclito Fortes (strictly protect) (Democrats Party, opposition; of Piaui) told Ambassador Sobel on March 28 he is deeply concerned about signs of terrorists in Brazil. He cited a published report (reftel) of a Brazilian guerrilla force similar to the FARC operating in Rondonia state, possibly with foreign support and revealed that a Brazilian Congressional inquiry had learned of foreign support for a Brazilian NGO, possibly with terrorist connections, in Teresina, Piaui. He said Bolivians seem "tired of the Bolivarian idea," and noted that Bolivian officials recently made positive statements to him about the importance of good bilateral relations with Brazil. Finally, he said Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was "thrown off balance" by compromising information from a laptop captured after Colombia's raid on FARC militants in Ecuador. Fortes is one of a modest number of legislators who are paying attention to what they consider to be emerging threats to Brazilian security. End summary.

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Brazilian Group Resembles FARC  
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¶2. (S) Chairman Fortes told Ambassador Sobel he is deeply concerned about reports of FARC-like terrorist activity in a remote area of Brazil. He cited a recent article in the March 26, 2008, edition of IstoE magazine that reported on the activities of a far left peasant movement called the Poor Peasants League (Liga dos Camponeses Pobres, "LCP"), with unknown, possibly foreign, funding, and in some ways similar to the FARC. According to IstoE, the LCP holds territory in Rondonia state, which borders the Bolivian departments of Pando and Beni. Chairman Fortes said he felt certain there was foreign, possibly even FARC, involvement in the LCP, and guerilla training in Brazil was a very serious matter. He speculated that the LCP could be using Russian or Iranian "technology." (Note: IstoE reported that LCP guerrillas are armed with handguns, grenades, and automatic weapons, including the American-made AR-15, the Russian-made AK-47, and the FAL, originally of Belgian manufacture but also manufactured in Brazil for its military use, all of which are

readily available on black markets in the region. End note.)

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Foreign Influence in a Brazilian NGO  
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13. (S) Fortes also shared with Ambassador information he stressed was very sensitive and should be strictly protected. He said that the Senate Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Non-Governmental Organizations learned that an NGO in Teresina, Piaui, supported by a Trotskyite faction of the Workers' Party (PT) had received substantial foreign funding channeled through a foreign international relations institution. This NGO, which he named as CEPAC, at one time had about 15 foreigners working for it for four to six months, he said. Chairman Fortes said these foreigners were either terrorists or they had participated in foreign movements. He pointed out that Teresina is a city with no history of urban disturbances, and therefore there should have been no reason to base foreign agents based there. He also said that in the period 2001-2002 an Italian terrorist was in Teresina, but was discovered, arrested, and removed from Brazil. (Note: The PT faction is probably the Socialist Democracy faction. CEPAC is the Piaui Cultural Action Center, or Centro Piauiense de Acao Cultural, a Brazilian NGO closely linked to the PT. In early March 2008, during the Senate investigation of NGOs, CEPAC came under scrutiny by opposition politicians for receiving large federal grants through the Agrarian Development Ministry. The governor of Piaui, Wellington Dias, belongs to the PT. Fortes is qualified to speak on conditions in Teresina: he was its mayor from 1989 to 1992. The Italian he mentioned might be Cesare Battisti, who was arrested in Rio de Janeiro on March

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18, 2007, but is still in Brazil pending extradition to Italy. End note.)

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Bolivia Tired of Bolivarian Idea  
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14. (S) Turning to the turmoil in Bolivia, Chairman Fortes noted that on the positive side, there is disenchantment in Bolivia with the Bolivarian idea. He said he had met earlier in the week of March 24 with the new Bolivian Ambassador to Brazil, the president of the Bolivian Senate, and the Chairman of the Bolivian Senate's Foreign Relations Committee. Implying that Bolivia wishes to repair its relationship with Brazil after its Bolivarian romance, Chairman Fortes said the Bolivian Ambassador apologized to him for some disagreements between presidents Lula and Morales a couple of years ago and agreed with Fortes that the two countries need to continue their tradition of friendly relations. Chairman Fortes also said that it is worrisome that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is able to exert pressure on Evo Morales "because he financed him." He added that the situation in Bolivia in "very serious," with disturbances and people in the streets.

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Captured FARC Documents Threw Chavez Off Balance  
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15. (S) Fortes said he had spoken with a person who was present at the Rio Group meeting in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, who reported that President Chavez had been thrown off balance by the discovery of compromising information on a laptop computer seized after the recent Colombian attack on FARC forces and, as a result, behaved in a comparatively subdued manner.

16. (C) Comment. Chairman Fortes is one of a few Brazilian legislators who have spoken to us of their concerns about Iranian and Venezuelan meddling in the region, threats to stability, and other national security issues. Fortes, more

than many, is paying attention to what he considers to be emerging threats inside and outside of Brazil. His concerns about the LCP and CEPAC seem valid, based on the information he has at hand, but we do not have enough information to evaluate the information's accuracy and the possible seriousness of the situations.

SOBEL